



# National Archives at Kansas City Newsletter

This December 2021 issue of the National Archives at Kansas City newsletter will be the last distributed. Beginning in spring 2022, we will share information about upcoming education and public programs through a new electronic newsletter distributed by the National Archives. You will be automatically subscribed to our education and public programs newsletter, which will include information about virtual and onsite events and programs occurring nationwide. If you wish to unsubscribe this newsletter, please email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov) and we will remove you from the list. Please monitor your email for our education and public programs newsletter to debut in spring 2022. Please continue to visit our [website](#) for the most current research news and updates.

## Upcoming Virtual Programs at the National Archives

The National Archives is continuing to offer a full slate of public programs in December. An extensive list can be found [here](#). All programs are scheduled according to Eastern Time.

### **Choctaw Confederates: The American Civil War in Indian Country**

On **Wednesday, December 1 at 1:00 p.m. EST**, the National Archives will host **Fay A. Yarbrough** for a discussion of *Choctaw Confederates*. When the Choctaw Nation was forcibly resettled in Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma in the 1830s, it was joined by enslaved Black people - the tribe had owned enslaved Blacks since the 1720s. In *Choctaw Confederates*, Yarbrough reveals that, while sovereignty and states' rights mattered to the Choctaw Nation's leaders, the survival of slavery also determined the Nation's support of the Confederacy. Yarbrough examines the experiences of Choctaw soldiers and notes that although their enthusiasm waned as the war persisted, military service allowed them to embrace traditional masculine roles that were disappearing in a changing political and economic landscape. By drawing parallels between the Choctaw Nation and the Confederate states, Yarbrough looks beyond the traditional binary of the Union and Confederacy and reconsiders the historical record. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).



### **Online Screening of December 7th**

On **Tuesday, December 7 at 12:00 p.m. EST**, In commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) and America's entry into the Second World War, the National Archives will screen *December 7th*, released by the U.S. Navy in 1943. The 20-minute film won the Academy Award® in 1944 for Best Documentary Short Subject. Other related films from the motion picture holdings of the National Archives will be shown. The screening will be introduced by National Archives Motion Picture Preservation Specialist **Audrey Amidon**. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).

## December 2021

### Inside This Issue

DECEMBER VIRTUAL PROGRAMS	1
EDUCATION RESOURCES	2
HIDDEN TREASURES FROM THE STACKS	3-5
FACILITY INFORMATION	5

### Upcoming Events

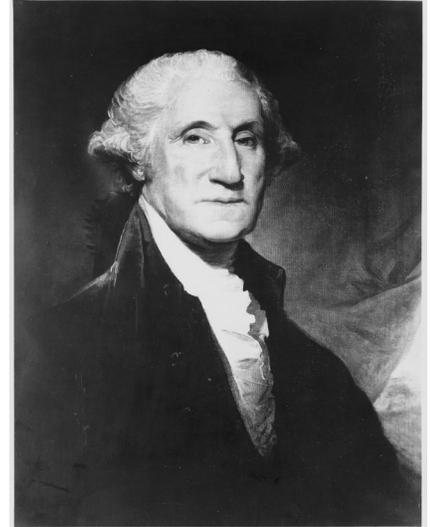
Unless noted, all events are held at the National Archives 400 W. Pershing Road Kansas City, MO 64108

NOTE: All in-person public events at National Archives facilities nationwide are cancelled until further notice. This includes in-person public programs, tours, school group visits, public meetings, external conferences, and facility rentals.

# December Virtual Programs for Educators and Students

## **Young Learners Program - Meet George Washington on Thursday, December 16 at 11:00 a.m. EST**

Young Learners can meet General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution (as portrayed by Doug Thomas). On Christmas night, December 25, 1776, General Washington decided on a drastic military maneuver. As winter winds blew, he crossed the Delaware River with his men and marched them to Trenton, New Jersey, to a much-needed victory that boosted morale for the Continental Army and the new United States. Hear General Washington share the strategy behind the victories at Trenton and Princeton along with the daunting first years of the Revolutionary War. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).



Right: Portrait of George Washington. Record Group 148, Records of Commissions of the Legislative Branch, 1928 - 2007; The George Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1931 - 1932; George Washington. National Archives Identifier 100310863.

## **We Rule: Civics for All of US - K-5 Civics Distance Learning Programs**

*We Rule: Civics for All of US* is a new education initiative from the National Archives that promotes civic literacy and engagement. We are providing teachers with programming, curricula, and exceptional field trip experiences both online and at our locations across the country. Our interactive distance learning programs draw upon the vast holdings of the National Archives to promote the knowledge and skills students need for civic engagement in the 21st century. To learn more or to schedule a program, visit the *We Rule* [website](#). Upcoming *We Rule* programs include:

### ***The Bill of Rights Protects You on Wednesday, December 15 at 11:15 a.m. EST***

Intended for Grades 6-12, in this interactive program, students will explore the Bill of Rights and how it outlines both limits on government and the rights of the people. We will work together to analyze three case studies that underscore the remedies that citizens have to address instances where their rights have been violated. This program will introduce students to the Bill of Rights and strengthen their civic understanding. [Registration](#) is required for this **free program**.

### ***Make Your Voice Count: Learning About the First Amendment on Wednesday, December 15 at 1:15 p.m. EST***

Intended for Grades K-2, students will explore the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights using primary historical sources to learn about the importance of rights and how to exercise their freedoms. After registering, you will receive the connection information via email the week of the event. [Registration](#) is required for this **free program**.

### ***The First Amendment: Five Rights in One on Wednesday, December 15 at 2:15 p.m. EST***

Intended for Grades 3-5, students will explore the First Amendment freedoms from the Bill of Rights in this interactive and engaging civics program based on historical primary sources from the National Archives. Students will learn about the importance of First Amendment rights, identify examples in photographs and short written documents, and discover how to exercise those freedoms. [Registration](#) is required for this **free program**.

### ***No Conscriptio Without Representation: Voting Rights and the Constitution on Thursday, December 16 at 11:15 a.m. EST***

Intended for Grades 9-12, students will explore the progression of U.S. voting rights - with a focus on the effort to lower the voting age to 18 - using National Archives primary source records, including the Constitution, Constitutional amendments, legislation, a Supreme Court case, photos, videos and political cartoons. [Registration](#) is required for this **free program**.

### ***Voting Rights, the Constitution, & Representative Government on Thursday, December 16 at 1:15 p.m. EST***

Intended for Grades 6-8, students will explore the progression of U.S. voting rights and its impact on representative government using National Archives primary source records, including the Constitution, Constitutional amendments, legislation, photos and political cartoons. [Registration](#) is required for this **free program**.

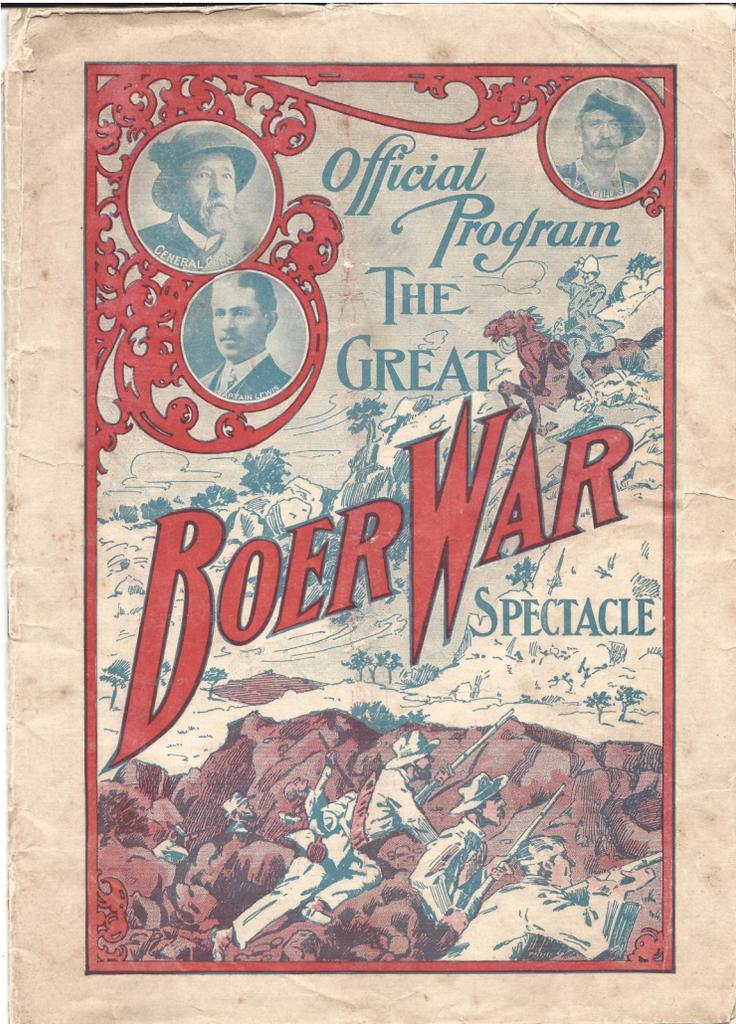
# Hidden Treasures from the Stacks

## The Boer War Show

For better or worse, a fractious humanity enjoys its day in court. This fact of our litigious society ensures that almost anything is subject to legal conflict and can enter the records of the federal courts, thereby creating a trove of assorted historic gems and baubles - treasures in the stacks. The gems are the most precious evidence of our past, but the baubles may be more entertaining. Both may be mined profitably by historians or anyone interested in our history. The US Circuit Court for the Eastern District of Missouri (St. Louis) case of *William A.S. Stewart v. The South African Boer War Exhibition Company*, may be a bauble, but its wider story provides an interesting view of the age that produced it, the curious legacies of the event in controversy, as well as the ability of a court record to shine light on almost any subject under the sun.

The year was 1904. The place, St. Louis. The occasion, the centennial celebration of the Louisiana Purchase, known variously as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the St. Louis World's Fair. The extravaganza was indeed global in scope, catholic in its wide offerings, which attracted nearly 20 million visitors between April 30 and December 1. More than sixty foreign countries and a majority of US states operated exhibits on the exposition's 1,270 acres. The Fair's fare included demonstrations of the latest scientific and medical technologies, such as wireless communications, fax machines, and X-rays. New foods - ice cream cones, peanut butter and cotton candy - were debuted which would soon change the world's taste. Famous folks attended in abundance, including President Theodore Roosevelt, Helen Keller, and a Tennessee distiller named Jack Daniels, whose potent libation won a blue ribbon as the world's best whiskey. The Fair also hosted the 1904 Olympics.

The Olympic marathon featured two Black South African entrants, the continent's first indigenous Olympians. The pair pulled double duty. In addition to their long run they were in St. Louis as part of another exposition feature: The Boer War Show.



The duo reenacted the messenger runner roles they played during the conflict also known as the Second Boer War, the Anglo Boer War, and more commonly in modern times, the South African War. The struggle is generally dated from October 11, 1899, to May 31, 1902, although guerilla resistance simmered on. Great Britain prevailed in the conflict as the Afrikaner Orange Free State and South African Republic disappeared from the map. Less than two years later the war would resume in spirit for the entertainment of Fair visitors.

Battle reenactments date back to antiquity. The Romans flooded the Colosseum for mock naval battles (known as *naumachia*) that pitted the enslaved versus the imprisoned in the parts of the original combatants. Thousands died for the entertainment of the masses and the amusement of the emperor. It was a fake battle with real blood. "Wild West" shows promoted by Buffalo Bill Cody and numerous imitators had stimulated a contemporary appetite for sanguine re-imaginings of mortal strife. The Boer War Show was in the same tradition, and market.

Twice a day, 600 former soldiers from both sides of the conflict reenacted two crucial battles of the South African War: the Battle of Colenso, in which the Boers triumphed, and the Battle of Paardeberg, which featured a British victory and the surrender of the Boer forces by General Piet Cronje. Artillery boomed. Bullets sang. Men fell. Fairgoers swooned. An average of 34,000 visitors thrilled to the daily recreations.

Above: Program cover from The Great Boer War Show. Image courtesy of a private collection from National Archives staff.

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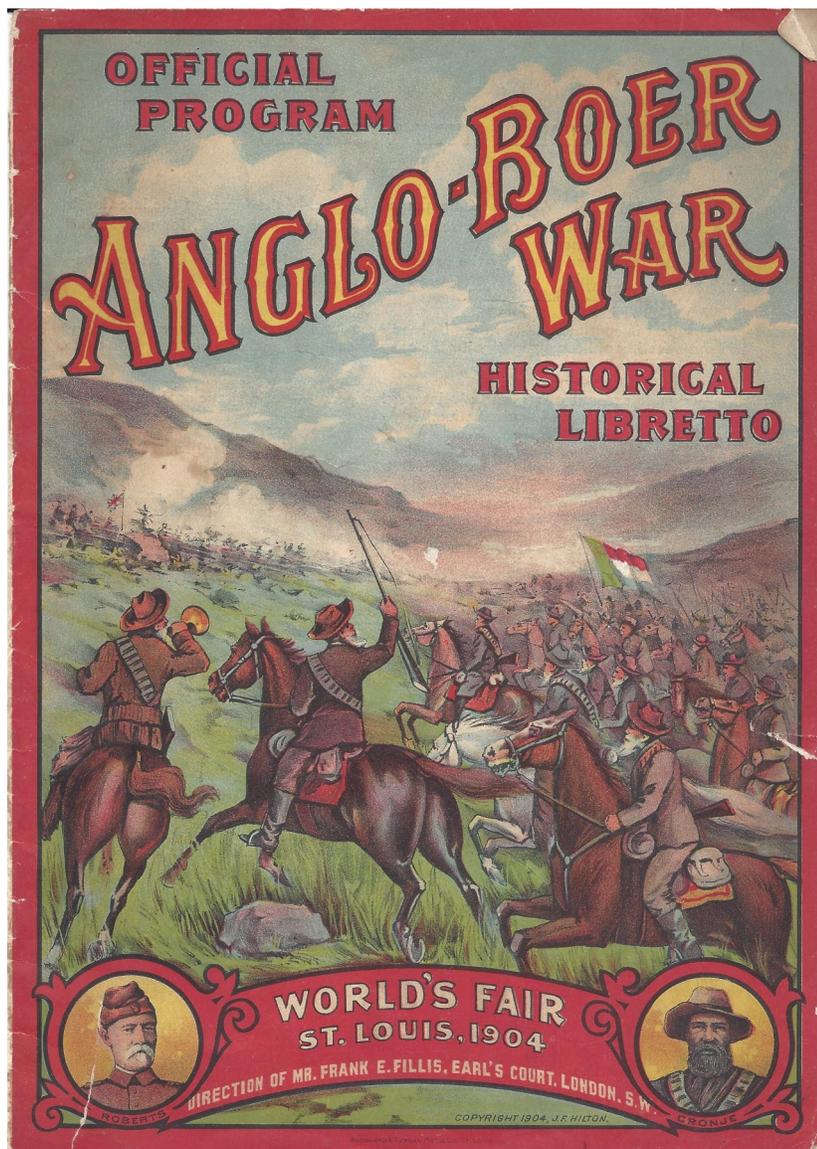
But the enmity wasn't all acting. Like the mock battles of the Romans centuries before, the Boer War Show spilled real blood, at least offstage. The Afrikaners hated the English, the press reported. Boer General Ben Viljoen, one of the show's star attractions, explained, "the hardest work we have in managing the Boer war show is keeping the Boers and Britons from fighting. They will not get along together.... The old war spirit breaks out so often we have to be constantly on the watch or serious trouble might ensue." Serious trouble did ensue on November 12, 1904, when British veteran John Backhouse was shot and killed by a Fair security guard while attempting to break up a fight between Boer and British reenactors. The Fair guard was soon revealed as a former Boer volunteer from St. Louis.

The Boers who joined the troupe did so largely because their countries were gone. And of course for the money. (The British interest was also financial.) What else could motivate a man like General Cronje to reenact the humiliation of his surrender for the entertainment of the masses if not a few mercenary banknotes? A *Kansas City Star* reporter questioned the dignity of the whole enterprise and concluded, "Looking into the face of the aged Cronje, you find, perhaps, some clue to the mystery, and you say to yourself that if he was once a hero without knowing it, so now he is a burlesquer without a sense of humor or a sense of shame."

Despite the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the fake battle, money was always short and led to a new theatre of war - the courts, and Major Stewart's suit against the company's directors. The South African Boer War Exhibition Company had hired the major in the spring of 1904 to recruit former soldiers and procure supplies. Stewart charged that the company had failed to pay his salary or reimburse his expenses. He asked for more than \$2,500.00 in damages; nearly \$78,000.00 in 2021 dollars. Major Stewart also asked that a receiver be placed in charge of the company to prevent the directors from selling its assets to finance a scheme to take the show on the road after the Fair closed. In this case, the spoils did not go to the victor, Major Stewart, as his claim and his request for a receiver went unheeded.

The Boer War Show, like the guerilla war that followed the main conflict, rumbled on for a few more years, appearing in Kansas City, New Orleans, and Richmond, Virginia, among other stops, before climaxing with a year-long run on New York's Coney Island. Some of the reenactors stayed. Two veterans so entrenched themselves in a New York City bar during the Coney Island run that they inspired characters in Eugene O'Neill's play, *The Iceman Cometh* (A Boer and a Brit: "Piet Wiljoen" and "Cecil Lewis."). A colony of Boer War show veterans migrated to Mexico in search of a new life and took up (real) arms again to fight in support of the Mexican Revolution. Other Boers moved on to New Mexico where they became known for the high quality of the goats they bred, a breed that continues to win prizes to this day for their descendants.

Major Stewart's fate is unknown. Did he reenlist in the show? Return to England? Disappear into a bar? History isn't telling. But one thing we do know for certain is that a part of him will always be found in the stacks of the National Archives at Kansas City.



Above: Program cover from The Anglo-Boer War Show. Image courtesy of a private collection from National Archives staff.

